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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to investigate censorship attempts in Maryland during the period 1966-1975 by consulting issues of the "Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom" published by the American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom. The areas covered included locations, sources, and reasons for censorship attempts: the institutions affected: the materials censored: and the results of the attacks. Findings showed an increase in censorship attempts after 1970, a censorship rate for the state of Maryland 68% higher than the national rate, and a higher rate in urban areas of Baltimore and near Washington, D.C. Educational institutions had approximately 50% more censorship attempts than noneducational institutions. The largest number of complaints in schools was from parents, and the largest number of attempts among noneducational institutions came from the Maryland Board of Motion Picture Censors. The major reason for censorship was obscenity or obscenity related factors. Other reasons included upholding the image of the city of Baltimore, which resulted in the banning of the television show "Hot L Baltimore." Results also indicated that 60.5% of all censorship attempts were successful. (Lists are provided of the kinds of institutions and the titles of the materials under censorship attack.) (MKM)

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Censorship at the "Hot L Baltimore;" a Study of the Problem in Maryland

Dr. L.B. Woods

Of the original thirteen colonies, Maryland is the most famous for having provided religious freedom. As early as 1649, the colonial assembly drafted a law granting freedom of worship and protection for all faiths. Many Americans take religious freedom for granted today, but few realize that attacks on their liberties still occur. A study at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate Library School investigated censorship attempts in Maryland during the decade 1966-1975. [1] The areas covered included (a) where censorship attempts occurred, (b) sources of attempts, (c) reasons for attempts, (d) the institutions affected, (e) materials censored and (f) results of the attacks. The results show an increase in censorship attempts in recent years.

For the period 1966-1975, the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association reported over 2,170 censorship cases for the nation; seventy-one or 3.2 percent were in Maryland. Maryland's censorship index can be compared to the national average index of 1.00 by dividing its percent of national censorship attempts by its percent of the national population.

[1] Data for the study was obtained from all issues of the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom published by ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom from 1966-1975. This paper concerns only those cases reported in the Newsletter.

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Since Maryland's population is 4,094,000 [2] or 1.9 percent of the national total, its censorship index is 1.68. Maryland's censorship rate, then, is sixty-eight percent higher than the national rate. [3]

The study included instances of censorship in both educational and non-educational institutions. Educational institutions were affected aproximately fifty percent more often than non-educational institutions.

TABLE I

Number of Censorship Cases Reported in Maryland, 1966-1975

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Year	Cases	Year	Cases
1966	1	1966	1
1967	3	1967	0
1968	2	1968	1
1969	3	1969	2
1970	9	1970	7
1971	2	1971	5
1972	4	1972	3
1973	6	1973	2
1974	9	1974	5
1975	4	1975	2
Total	43	Total	28

[2]Bureau of the Census estimate, 1974.

[3]An analysis of censorship nationwide can be found in L.B. Woods' two articles, "For Sex: See Librarian." Library Journal 103 (1 Sept. 1978): 1551-6 and "The Most Censored Materials in the U.S." (1 Nov. 1978): 2170-3.

Censorship attempts increased dramatically after 1970 throughout Maryland and the nation with rapidly changing sexual, political, and religious attitudes being partially responsible. The increase was especially sharp in Maryland. Within a one year period between 1969 and 1970, censorship attempts jumped from three to nine in educational institutions, and from two to seven in non-educational institutions. On a larger scale, educational establishments saw nine attempts between 1966-1969 compared to thirty-four between 1970-1975. Non-educational institutions saw a similar contrast with four attempts between 1966-1969 and twenty-four between 1970-1975. Over all, censorship attempts in Maryland more than quadrupled in the early 1970s.

TABLE II

Places of Censorship Attacks in Maryland, 1966-1975

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Anne Arundel County	1	Annapolis (Anne Arundel Co.)	2
Arnold	1	Anne Arundel County	1
Baltimore	7	Baltimore	17
Bel Air	1	Bethesda (Mont. Co.)	1
College Park (Prince Georges Co.)	3	Bowie	1
Howard County	3	College Park (Prince Geo. Co.)	1
Montgomery County	13	Cumberland	1
Potomac (Mont. Co.)	1	Fort Meade (Anne Arundel Co.)	1
Prince Georges County	8	Glen Burnie (Anne Arundel Co.)	1
Rockville (Mont. Co.)	1	La Plata	1
Silver Spring (Mont. County)	1	Montgomery County	1
Snow Hill	1		
Univ.of Maryland (not indicated if at Baltimore or College Park Campuses)	2		

All but four of the locations in Table II are in close proximity to the major urban areas of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. This follows the pattern in other states where censorship attempts tend to increase near densely populated areas. Anne Arundel, Montgomery,and Prince Georges Counties are among the most densely populated counties in the state, and thirty-seven attacks, or fifty-two percent of all attempts occurred in these areas. In addition, another twenty-four attempts, or thirty-three percent of the total occurred in Baltimore, the state's largest city (located outside the three counties mentioned above). This means that a total of eighty-five percent of the attacks occurred in densely populated areas. One reason for this may be that with an increase in population density comes an exposure to more diverse, hence more potentially controversial ideas. As a result, those unreceptive to certain ideas may attempt to censor them.

TABLE III

Sources of Censorship Attempts in Maryland, 1966-1975

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Board of Regents	1	Chamber of Commerce	1
Citizens	5	City authorities	2
College Administration	1	County executive	1
College President	2	Customs officials	1
Government Officials	1	Judge	1
John Birch Society	1	Md. Board of Censors	7
Law Enforcement Assoc.	1	Neighbors	1
Library Patron	1	Police	3
Md. Board of Censors	1	State General Assembly	1
Media materials selection committee	1	T.V. Station	1
Parents	10	U.S. Army	1
Principals	5	Not given	8
Printer	1		
State's Attorney	1		
School Board members	2		

TABLE III, Sources of Censorship Attempts, cont.

Educational Institutions	
School officials	5
School system	1
Student judicial board	1
Town or county officials	3
University officials	3

The largest source of complaints in educational institutions was parents. Their complaints were usually focused on controversial reading material in public schools; some objections were to textbooks, others to popular titles. In 1975, a Montgomery County group called Parents Who Care filed a complaint that concerned sixty textbooks. One was a social studies text entitled Man: A Course of Study. (MACOS had been censored in other states as well). The group claimed the books did not conform to the prevailing moral values of Montgomery County and were biased concerning religious issues. [4]

In 1973, a group of parents from Prince Georges County objected to a series of books including The Godfather, Catcher in the Rye, Go Ask Alice, and two sex education books. They termed the books "sexually explicit and inappropriate." [5] Another attempt came from the John Birch Society when, in 1966, it objected to the textbook The American Pageant: A History of the Republic, claiming it was a "parody of the findings of historical research, a vulgarization of the men and events of the past, a cheapening of history and a distortion of the record." [6]

[4]Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 24 (Nov. 1975): 171.

[5]Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 22 (Sept. 1973): 105.

[6]Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 15 (May 1966): 28.

The largest source of attempts among non-educational institutions was the Maryland Board of Motion Picture Censors. As is often the case among non-educational institutions, the films involved were all allegedly obscene. Of the seven cases involving the Board of Censors, only one was unsuccessful: The Life and Times of Xaviera Hollander. But the film was spared censorship only because of a technicality; a circuit court judge ordered the Board to license the film because it had failed to disapprove it within a five day time limit. [7]

TABLE IV

Reasons for Censorship Attempts in Maryland, 1966-1975

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Anti-policeman	1	Contempt of Court	1
Critical of school policy	1	Critical of county	1
Demeaning	1	Disorderly conduct	1
Drugs	2	Desplays negative image	1
Homosexuality	1	Inflammatory	1
Inflammatory	1	Obscene	16
Innaccurate	1	Policy disagreement	1
Language	4	Political	1
Libel	1	Pornography	2
Morality	5	Subversive	1
Obscene	8	Not given	2
Political	5		
Poor quality	1		
Racism	4		
Religion	3		
Sex	7		
Unauthorized	1		
Not given	3		

[7] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 24 (March 1975): 47.

As is the case in many states, the major reason for censorship in both educational and non-educational institutions was obscenity, accounting for sixteen percent of educational and fifty-seven percent of non-educational attacks. Obscenity related reasons, however, (homosexuality, language, morality, sex) accounted for another thirty-four percent of educational attacks bringing the total of obscenity related reasons in that category to fifty percent. Likewise, pornography accounted for another seven percent of non-educational attacks elevating the obscene-pornographic total in that category to sixty-four percent.

Some less prevalent but interesting reasons include anti-police bias, demeaning commentary, contempt of court, and concern for a city's image. In Prince Georges County in November 1970, a group of parents and a law enforcement association tried to have the children's book Sylvester and the Magic Pebble removed from elementary school libraries. They claimed the story fostered anti-police sentiment because it pictured pigs in police uniforms. The school board disagreed and retained the book in school libraries. [8] In December 1973, officials at a Baltimore high school censored the Woodland Lampoon, a student newspaper which had printed an article about cheerleaders which the school felt was demeaning. [9]

[8] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 20 (January 1971): 27.

[9] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 23 (March 1974): 41-2.

In a Cumberland case involving the newspaper The People's Guardian, the editor of the paper was foung guilty of contempt of court and fined a total of $ 339. He disobeyed an order which prohibited the photographing of state troppers inside the county courthouse. [10] Finally, the city of Baltimore's image caused a local television station to ban the show Hot L Baltimore in January 1975. WJZ-TV banned the premiere episode of the show and made decisions about whether to air future episodes on a week to week basis. The station announced it was "concerned with the image of our city as shown in the program." [11]

TABLE V

Institutions Affected by Censorship Attempts in Maryland, 1966-1975

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
College	2	Army Post	1
High Schools	18	Bookstores	4
Public Libraries	4	Magazine distributor	1
Public schools	10	Newspaper distributor	1
School libraries	4	Person	2
Universities	8	Public business	1
		Press	4
		Public places	2
		Public store	2
		Sidewalk	1
		Theaters	7
		T.V. Show	1

Predictably. high schools were the educational institution

[10] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 21 (May 1972): 83.

[11] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 24 (March 1975): 44.

most often affected. The curricula for this age group begins to address adult topics, hence it becomes controversial. While college age students are usually of the legal age to choose their own reading material or viewing preferences, high school students are thought unable to deal maturely with subjects such as sex, homosexuality, drugs, foul language, birth control, abortion, and other controversial topics. Thirty-nine percent of attempts in educational institutions occurred exclusively at the high school level. Another twenty-two percent occurred at public schools where the level was unspecified. Less than a quarter of the attempts occurred at the college or university level.

As usual among non-educational institutions, theaters were the most often censored, always for showing allegedly obscene films. Some unusual establishments censored were an army post and a public sidewalk. In 1971, four persons were arrested in Baltimore for disorderly conduct after refusing to break up a gathering on a public sidewalk; a District court judge later acquitted the accused. [12] In 1974, at the Fort Meade Army Post, officials restricted the distribution of the newspaper Highway 13. The paper was sometimes critical of the military and the Vietnam war, and the officials restricted the distribution of the paper to only four locations on the base. [13]

[12] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 21 (March 1972): 47.

[13] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 23 (March 1974): 39.

TABLE VI

Materials Under Censorship Attack in Maryland, 1966-1975

Educational Institutions

Books:

General Titles:

Black Boy *
Blues for Mr. Charlie
Catcher in the Rye (2) *
The Deer Park
Deliverance (2) *
Go Ask Alice (2) *
The Godfather *
A Horse is Dead
The Little Red School Book *
Lysistrata *
The Major Young Poets
Manchild in the Promised Land (2) *
Real Magic
Soul on Ice (2) *
Why Are We in Vietnam? *

Children's:

Little Black Sambo (2) *
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble *

Textbooks:

The American Pageant: A History of the Republic
Biological Science: An Ecological Approach
A Boy Today, A Man Tomorrow
Communicating Series
How to Take the Worry out of Being Close (2) *

* Denotes one of the most censored items in educational institutions, 1966-1975. Complete list appears in L.B. Woods. "Censorship Involving Educational Institutions in the U.S., 1966-1975." (Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Texas at Austin, 1977), p. 117-19.

TABLE VI, cont.

Books, cont.:

Textbooks, cont.:

Man: A Course of Study
Our Working World: Families at Work

Magazines:

Campus:

Argus (3) (Univ. of Md.)
Calvert Review (Univ. of Md.)
Dialogue (Univ. of Md.)

Newspapers:

Montgomery County Sentinel

Campus:

The Diamondback (Univ. of Md.)
John Hopkins University Newsletter
Today's World (Woodlawn H.S.)
The Trailblazer
Woodland Lampoon (Woodlawn H.S.)

Underground:

Changes (2)
Red Brick
Washington Free Press

People:

Speakers from National Student Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, and representatives from Women's liberation, pro-abortion and gun control groups.
Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, (speaker on homosexuality)
Rebecca Dawson - advisor of Snow Hill High School newspaper

Curriculum:

"Indecent" poetry

Miscellaneous:

Concise Guide (evaluations of courses offered at the Univ. of Md.)
Freshman Handbook (Univ. of Md.)
Montgomery County Teacher
New Mobe (political leaflet)
Photographs depicting heterosexual and lesbian acts
Religious celebrations in schools
Slide presentation about contraceptives
Student editorial critical of school censorship code

TABLE VI, cont.

Miscellaneous, cont.:

The Terropin (Univ. of Md. yearbook)

Radio Station:

WMUC (Univ. of Md.)

Films:

Community Control (Black Panther)
The Lottery *
Off the Pig (Black Panther)
Pink Flamingo *

Non-educational Institutions

Books:

Male Homosexual Marriages
The Psychology of Group Sex

Magazines:

Exclusive
International Nudist Sun
127,000 magazines (82 issues of varying #s)
Review International
Solis

Newspapers:

Evening Capitol
Highway 13
People's Guardian

Underground:

Harry
Washington Free Press (3)

Films:

Deep Throat (2)

TABLE VI, cont.

Films, cont.:

Deep Throat - Part IV
The Devil in Miss Jones
Doctors from Copenhagen
11 obscene films
I Am Curious Yellow
The Life and Times of Xaviera Hollander
Man and Wife
Peep shows
Spectrum of Modern Human Sexuality
36 Obscene films

Miscellaneous:

distribution of all obscene matter
Freedom of Assembly
obscene poster

People:

William Stump (editor of Baltimore - the Chamber of Commerce magazine)
6 news media representatives

Businesses:

Bookstores

T.V. Show:

Hot L Baltimore

Maryland's pattern of censorship in educational institutions closely parallels the national pattern with twelve of seventeen general titles censored also among the most censored items in the nation. The four most controversial titles nationally, Catcher in the Rye, Soul on Ice, Manchild in the Promised Land and Go Ask Alice, were all censored more than once in Maryland.

The magazine Argus, a student publication of the University of Maryland, was censored three times within four months. In August 1970, the Board of Regents held hearings to hear opinions about its plan to end student fee subsidization of campus publications. The move was a reaction to "obscene material which appeared in Argus and other campus publications. [14] The following month, the University censored a picture of a burning flag which was supposed to appear on the cover of the magazine; a panel of judges ruled that the University had no right to do so. Finally, in November, the University witheld funds from the magazine, and the printer refused to print it because the magazine was conducting a pornography contest. [15]

The underground newspaper Changes was also censored twice in Howard County. In May 1973, ten students from four county high schools were suspended for distributing the paper; the principals disapproved of the publication because it included articles in favor of gay liberation, abortion, and the legalization of marijuana. [16] In April 1974, three more high school students were suspended for distributing the paper; this time the objections were to articles entitled "Lesbians and Faggots," "High School Resistance," and "Energy Crisis Hoax." [17]

[14] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 19 (November 1970): 88.

[15] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 20 (January 1971): 11,24.

[16] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 22 (July 1973): 89.

[17] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 23 (July 1974): 81.

Among non-educational institutions, the underground newspaper Washington Free Press was censored three times. In March 1969, a distributor of the paper in Bethesda was sentenced to six months in jail and fined $ 5,000 for distributing obscene material. [18] In January 1970, a merchant in College Park who sold the paper was convicted of selling obscene material, but his conviction was eventually overturned in 1971. [19] The third attempt arose after a circuit court judge ordered the paper investigated for subversion. However, a federal court panel dismissed the case because the state's anti-subversive law was unconstitutional. [20]

An unusual case involving a bookstore occurred in Baltimore. Most cases involving bookstores arise out of the distribution of obscene material. But this case revolved around a neo-nazi merchant who planned to operate a bookstore in a residential area. After neighbors complained, the zoning board withdrew its approval for the store because its sole purpose would be to disseminate inflammatory literature. [21]

[18] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 18 (July 1969): 59.

[19] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 19 (July 1970): 55.

[20] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 19 (May 1970): 44.

[21] Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom 22 (May 1973): 53.

TABLE VII

Disposition of Censorship Attempts in Maryland, 1966-1975.

Educational Institutions		Non-educational Institutions	
Successful Attacks	25	Successful Attacks	18
Unsuccessful Attacks	11	Unsuccessful Attacks	5
Partially successful	0	Partially successful	2
Not Known	7	Not Known	3

Successful attempts resulted in the banning of materials, unsuccessful attacks in the successful defense of materials, and partially successful attempts in restricted access. In Maryland, an alarming 60.5 percent of all censorship attempts were successful. Twenty-two percent were not successful, and aproximately three percent were partially successful. The results of the rest were unknown or not reported by the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom.

Conclusion

Maryland's censorship index is well above the national average, and the rate for successful censorship is also substantial. The respect for individual freedoms which Maryland's early governors displayed is becoming more difficult to find amid a society riddled with controversy and division. Yet this controversy and division is precisely the reason why individual freedoms must be protected. Modern society is rapidly approaching a point at which answers to scores of scientific, political, and

moral problems must be found. Censorship is not the way to find these answers; it is, conversely, a way to stifle the ideas and discoveries which could guarantee a healthy future. As organizers and dispensers of knowledge, educators, including librarians, must do their part to protect intellectual freedom.